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ABSTRACT

Since Kagan (1963) developed interpersonal process recall more than 20 years ago, there has been continuing interest in the thought processes of practitioners. A case study approach was used to analyze the retrospections of a graduate student counselor and the cognitions of an experienced supervising psychologist about a counseling session with a 10-year-old disturbed boy. When coded independently on six dimensions, the supervisor's cognitions did not differ significantly from the counselor's retrospections. Both stressed present time, in-session and internal events, and both were professional rather than personal in orientation, and predominantly critical. These findings are consistent with the fact that the counselor and supervisor had had a close working relationship for several years. In contrast, when the supervisor listened to a tape of another counseling student, responses differed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings suggest that interpersonal process recall can be applied objectively to the supervisory process. (JAC)

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Counselor Retrospections and Supervisor Cognitions: A Case Study:

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Running head: Supervisor Cognitions

Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans, LA, April 1984.

Abstract

Using a case study approach, the investigators analyzed the retrospections of a graduate student counselor and the cognitions of an experienced supervising psychologist about a counseling session with a ten-year old disturbed boy. When coded independently on six dimensions, supervisor's cognitions did not differ significantly from counselor's retrospections. Study confirmed that interpersonal process recall can be applied objectively to supervisory process and it identified areas for further investigation.

Counselor Retrospections and Supervisor Cognitions:

A Case Study

Using a case study approach, we analyzed the retrospections of a graduate student counselor and the cognitions of an experienced supervising psychologist about a counseling interview with a 10 year old boy. We hoped to adapt a coding procedure to the supervisory process and to identify areas for further investigation.

Since Kagan (Kagan, Kratwohl, & Miller, 1963) developed interpersonal process recall more than 20 years ago, there has been continuing interest in the thought processes of practitioners. When private thoughts are requested from a cooperative counselor, client, or both, immediately after listening to a video or audio tape of a counseling session, IPR appears to have considerable value. Recently a number of investigators (Elliot, in press) have attempted to examine thought processes objectively. We (Dole and others, 1982) have recently developed a manual for coding six dimensions of counselor retrospections which can be applied to interpersonal process recall and which permit objective analysis of private events accompanying professional action. We have established that scoring congruence is attainable using this coding system. After reviewing a small number of selected cases we found that the six dimensions of counselor retrospection are relatively independent of client satisfaction and counselor interventions. We have also found that individual patterns of counselor retrospections can be

identified for each therapist which are unique and consistent with other information about the practitioner.

To our knowledge studies of concurrent supervisory processes are rare (Lambert, 1974) and no one has compared counselor thoughts with those of his or her supervisor. For a single case, then, we wished to examine similarities and differences in the inner-thoughts of the psychologist and his supervisee. We selected a single case design (Hersen & Barlow, 1978) as appropriate for exploratory investigation. We realized of course that generalizations from our data would be limited.

Methods

Participants

The participants were Dr. S, an experienced, licensed professional psychologist with a Ph.D. in combined school and counseling psychology who has supervised Hal for two years. Dr. S. describe himself as eclectic in his theoretical orientation but with some learnings toward a psychoanalytic approach. He is reported to be direct and critical in his supervisory style. He completed his doctorate two years ago and was at the time of the experiment director of psychological services in a school for learning disabled children.

Hal, the counselor, had completed his internship requirements but not dissertation at the same university that Dr. S. attended. Although he was a full time staff member at the school, Hal continued to receive regular supervision from Dr. S.

Robbie, the client, was a 10 year old emotionally disturbed boy who was a day pupil at the special school and had been seeing Hal regularly for 26 months.

Procedure

Hal was asked to select a client of his own choosing and to audiotape the full 30 minute session, conducting the session in his normal manner. Permission to audiotape was obtained from Robbie and his parents. Later that same day the experimenter set up two tape recorders for the counselor's use to make his retrospections following a standard procedure (Dole and others, 1982). One recorder was to play back the counseling session; the second recorder was to be used by the counselor to record his retrospections about what he felt was happening when he counseled the child.

Examples of the instructions to Hal:

"We are interested in what counselors are thinking and feeling as they are counseling, and what they are saying to themselves. We would like to explore what you are experiencing inside as you counsel Robbie. Our goal is thus to try and recreate your half-hour with Robbie and put you back in the actual situation for a second time... I am going to turn the tape on back to the beginning of the session and whenever you wish, stop the tape and say aloud what you were thinking or feeling..."

The experimentor repeated these instructions to Dr. S. independently, substituting "supervisor" and "supervising" as

appropriate. In other words, Dr. S. was asked to record his cognitions as he listened to the same taped counseling session.

Data Sources

The counseling session, the counselor's retrospections, and the supervisor's cognitions were transcribed. After training with practice materials until they reached 80% agreement, two raters independently coded the counselor retrospections and a second pair coded the supervisor's cognitions, following the manual developed by Dole and others (1982). In addition, three raters first defined the basic scoring units and then coded the counseling session between Hal and Robbie, following Hill, Greenwald, Lee, Charles, O'Farrell and Carter (1981). In all there were 112 counselor-client couplets or speaking turns, 360 scoring units, 22 counselor retrospections, and 24 supervisor cognitions.

Dimensions

The dependent measures were Time, Place, Focus, Locus, Orientation, and Mode (Table 1). These six dimensions are more fully defined with examples in Dole and others (1982). The manual also contains additional evidence of the psychometric properties of these dimensions.

According to Cohen's Kappa, congruence was satisfactory and percent of agreement exceeded 70 for all scoring categories.

Data Analysis

Chi-square was applied to each dimension and overall to test for significance of difference between Dr. S. and Hal. Since this

was an exploratory study, the concurrent counselor-client behaviors were content analyzed and inspected post hoc for their relationship to the retrospections and cognitions. In addition, the results of two other case studies were available for comparison. In one of these, Dr. S. had supervised Barb, another master's level counselor at the school. Her client was Eric, a 9 year old emotionally disturbed boy. In the second case study the supervisor was Dr. J., the administrator of a community college counseling service, the counselor was a practicum student from a nearby graduate program in counselor education and the client was a college student with study problems.

Results

Overall, and on all dimensions except Focus, the supervisor's cognitions did not differ substantially from counselor's retrospections (Table 2). Both Dr. S. and Hal stressed present time, in-session, and internal events, were professional rather than personal in orientation, and predominantly critical. The supervisor focused more on himself than did Hal, In contrast, when Dr. S. listened to Barb's session with her client, overall the proportions of his cognitions differed significantly from those of Barb's concurrent retrospections.

Content analysis post hoc confirmed that at several points during the session (40% of thoughts in all) Dr. S. and Hal were preoccupied with similar if not identical issues. For example, in respect to the same speaking turns, they both were concerned with whether or not the counselor was getting at the root of Robbie's issues, whether Robbie

was giving too much irrelevant detail; they voiced privately uncertainty about the direction of the session; both wondered why the counselor did not follow up on a statement by Robbie. Both in response to Robbie's statements in counseling wondered independently about his relationship with his sister.

Finally, by inspection we determined that the supervisor's and counselor's thoughts as coded on the six dimensions were largely independent of the counselor/client verbal response systems.

Time prohibits a full report here of the quantitative relationships during the interview between 14 counselor variables, 9 client variables, and 6 counselor dimensions and 6 supervisor dimensions of retrospection. As an example of this kind of rather complex analysis we considered the counselor and supervisor's modes (positive, neutral, or negative) by the preceding and following counselor-client statements as coded according to Hill (Hill et al., 1981). During simple client statements both counselor and supervisor were predominantly negative in their thoughts; during Robbie's descriptive statements, Dr. S. tended to be negative and Hal was neutral. During Hal's closed questions to Robbie, Hal tended to be negative in his retrospections, as was Dr. S. During open questions, Dr. S's cognitions tended to be coded as negative whereas Hal was either neutral or positive.

Discussion

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the private thoughts of Dr. S. and Hal during Hal's interview with Robbie

suggested substantial similarity. Tentatively we interpret this finding as consistent with the facts that Dr. S. and Hal had worked closely together at the special school for over 2 years, that Dr. S. was quite familiar with Robbie, the client, and that they had similar conceptualizations about Robbie as well as about the counseling process. From personal knowledge, interviews with Dr. S. and Hal, and the independent observations of colleagues, we concluded that they had a strong working alliance. Although both were humanist and analytic in their stated theoretical preferences, neither couched his thoughts in technical terms.

In contrast, as shown in Table 2, Dr. S. tended to differ from Barb both qualitatively and quantitatively in her counseling of Eric, another emotionally disturbed boy. As Dr. S. listened to Barb while counseling Eric. He was critical of her and had a hard time maintaining his attention.

It is, of course, impossible to make sense out of the private events of supervisors and counselors without taking into account the behaviors of the counselor and client. After trying out the Hill classification system we remain skeptical about its applicability. Our raters considered it "too molecular" and felt the category system failed to capture the meaning of the verbal response processes for the participants. They felt that the counselor and client response unit, essentially a grammatical sentence, lost some of the essential quality of the verbal transaction. In comparison with the DeLoretto

(1971) coding system which we had used in previous analyses, we found it much harder to align cognitions and retrospections with interventions. On the other hand, the finding that the client, Robbie's, tendency to use simple description and the counselor's over use of closed questions were associated with negative and critical thoughts by Dr. S. is highly consistent with other findings and with our knowledge of the case.

This sample case study as a research strategy is intended to be exploratory. We consider it important because it suggests new perspectives and the possibility of innovative practices in supervision. For example, to understand how and what supervisors think, investigators should account not only for the counseling process and the counselor's thoughts but also the history of the relationship between the several participants. The case of Dr. S. and Hal suggests that as in other intimate human relationships participants may tend to think alike. Thus Hal may have interiorized his mentor, Dr. S. The length and quality of their relationship appears to have made a big difference.

In sum, this study may have laid some ground work for reconceptualization about the complex processes involved in supervision. Interpersonal process recall is clearly applicable and a fruitful avenue for inquiry. Although difficult and challenging, it also appears possible to modify or classify private thoughts objectively. Finally, we suggest that a <u>combination</u> of case study approaches, analogue and experimental studies may be fruitful.

Table 1

Supervisor Cognitions and Counselor Retrospection Dimensions

A supervisor cognition or counselor retrospection is coded on six dimensions, treated independently. For each dimension one category as defined below is assigned on the basis of the counselor or supervisor's thought. The target of the retrospection or cognition may be an event, experience, thought, feeling, person, statement, etc.

Note: The second example for each category represents a typical supervisor cognition.

Dimension	Category	Target	Examples
TIME FRAME	Past	Occurred before the session started.	He was angry at the party last night. She fouled up their relationship last session.
	Present	Occurring now.	She is saying something important now. He is really on the ball.
	Future	Will or may occur after the moment.	She'll make up with him. He ought to ask her about her mother.

(table continues)

Table 1

Supervisor Conditions and Counselor Retrospection Dimensions (continued)

Dimension	Category	Target	Examples
PLACE	In session	Entirely in the counseling experience.	He's breathing hard. She's right in her interpretation.
	Out of session	Partially outside of counseling.	It is starting to snow. Wonder how her father's death fitted in.
FOCUS	Client	Primarily or partially the client.	He's upset today. The client sounds angry to me.
	Counselor	Primarily the counselor.	I should shut up here. She's asking too many questions.
	Counselor/client	Counselor and client viewed as single unit.	We're not communicating. They're not communicating.
	Supervisor	Primarily the supervisor.	Dr. X won't like this. I am bored.
	Supervisor/counselor	Supervisor and counselor viewed as single unit.	We'll have to talk about this woman.

(table continues)

Table 1

Supervisor Conditions and Counselor Retrospection Dimensions (continued)

Dimension	Category	Target	Examples
LOCUS	External	Entirely public, verifiable by direct observation, overt	He's met a girl. She's laughing.
	Internal	Primarily or partially covert, as inferred private event, label, state, or attribute.	Maybe I'm overprotective. Looks like transference.
ORIENTATION	Professional	Entirely in context of professional relationship.	He's really motivated now. She's backing off the client.
	Personal	Primarily or partially out of professional context.	I must call my wife. This is giving me a headache.
MODE	Neutral	Recalled without evaluation, little affect.	He's thinking about it. She's reflecting.
	Positive	Shows satisfaction, approval.	What a great insight! That was a good reflection.
	Negative	Shows dissatisfaction, anger, patience, or doubt.	Damn, can't he see the point. He's not listening to her.

Table 2

Supervisor (Dr. S.) vs Two Supervisees (Barb and Hal) on Six Restrospective Dimensions

Dimension	Dr. S. (N=17)	Barb (N=25)	Dr. S. (N=24)	Hal (N=22)
Time				
Past	4.4%	30.0%	8.0%	0.0%
Present	81 7	66.0	92.0	100.0
Future	13.9	4.0	0.0	0.0
Place				
In	51.7	61.2	83.0	86.0
Out	48.3	38.8	17.0	14.0
Focus				
Client	5.5	70.8	17.0	27.0
Counselor	23.9	29.2	42.0	68.0
Client/Counselor	16.7	0.0	25.0	5.0
Supervisor	47.2	--	17.0	--
Supervisor/Counselor	6.7	--	0.0	--
Locus				
External	46.1	26.8	75.0	95.0
Internal	53.9	72.2	25.0	5.0
Orientation				
Professional	59.4	71.2	79.0	59.0
Personal	40.6	28.8	21.0	41.0

(table continues)

Table 2

Supervisor (Dr. S.) vs Two Supervisees (Barb and Hal) on Six Retrospective Dimensions (continued)

Dimensions	Dr. S. (N=17)	Barb (N=25)	Dr. S. (N=24)	Hal (N=22)
Mode				
Neutral	40.5	48.2	54.0	45.0
Positive	5.6	24.8	17.0	14.0
Negative	53.9	26.8	29.0	41.0
	X^2 = 40.70		X^2 = 17.57	
	df 16, p 01		df 15, N.S.	

Note. When the proportions of Dr. S's cognitions during Barb's interview are compared with those during Hal's sessions, X^2 = 25.87, df 16., p <.10.

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